

Also by Mary Luckhurst

DRAMATURGY: A Revolution in Theatre
THEATRE AND CELEBRITY, 1660-2000

ON ACTING

ON DIRECTING

PLAYING FOR REAL

CARYL CHURCHILL

Also by Emilie Morin

SAMUEL BECKETT AND THE PROBLEM OF IRISHNESS
THEATRE AND GHOSTS (ed. with Mary Luckhurst)

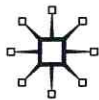
Theatre and Human Rights after 1945

Things Unspeakable

Edited by

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Things Unspeakable



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*For Anne and Jean Morin, who never give up
For Peta Tait, inspirational feminist academic*

43. Daisey, *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*, 61.
 44. See Reuters Press Report (San Francisco), 13 January 2012.
 45. Yukari Iwatani Kane, *Haunted Empire: Apple after Steve Jobs* (London: William Collins, 2014), 126–5.
 46. Daisey, 'Some Thoughts after the Storm'.

9 Gender-based Violence and Human Rights: Participatory Theatre in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Ananda Breed

During the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda over one million Tutsi and Hutu moderates were massacred, and an estimated 350,000 women and girls were raped, often in public locations.¹ Anti-Tutsi propaganda demonized Tutsi women as traitors and prompted a sexual and gendered form of genocide involving, as Usta Kaitezi reports, '[r]ape, gang rape, being raped with objects, sexual mutilation, forced sexual intercourse with dead animals, sexual captivity, forced public nudity, intentional transmission of HIV/AIDS, the mutilation of breasts, the cutting open of wombs and removal of the foetus, and forced intercourse between victims'.² The public dimensions of sexual violence and rape and the correlation between an increase in gender-based violence and the 1994 genocide have attracted close scrutiny.³ In this chapter, I contextualize some of the challenges facing applied theatre practitioners in relation to human rights issues and the navigation of the agendas between international donor relations and domestic justice. I will focus on *Ukuri Mubinyoma (Truth in Lies)*, a participatory theatre project designed to encourage the debate on gender-based violence that toured Rwanda in 2006. I contributed as co-writer of the grant and also functioned as a consultant and artistic collaborator.⁴ My perspective on gender-based violence in Rwanda is indebted to Article 2 of Law N°59/2008 of 10 September 2008 relating to the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence, and defining it as 'any act that results in bodily, psychological, sexual and economic harm to somebody just because they are female or male'.⁵ This new law is as much focused on gender-based violence as it is on women's emancipation and is imperative for development and equality. A political complexity of

this new law, however, is that it also seems to be used to detract from the witnessing of ongoing ethnic violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and human rights violations in Rwanda conducted by the current government controlled primarily by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).⁶

Following the decimation of Rwandan men in the genocide, gender-based violence often appears to emerge as a reaction against women who now need to act as breadwinners in order to keep themselves and their dependents alive. These new working roles beyond the domestic are contrary to customary gender roles in Rwanda, but are imperative for the country's socio-economic survival and international development strategy. Gender-based violence is therefore a crime that limits economic improvement, but the deep-seated cultures of shame and silence in Rwanda often render gender-based violence unspeakable.⁷ Although Rwanda has achieved the world's highest female representation in parliament (56 per cent), Amnesty International reports indicate that 'there is some evidence that the incidence of gender-based crimes is now higher than it was before the genocide'.⁸ The statistics provided in the 2004 National Research on Violence Against Women report show that as many as one in every four women were victims of sexual violence between 1999 and 2004; the 2010 Demographic and Health Survey states that two in five women have suffered from physical violence since the age of 15; one in five women have experienced sexual violence; and 56 per cent of married women have suffered from spousal or partner abuse.⁹ Kubai and Ahlberg stress the importance of the underlying cultural issues that perpetuate gender-based violence, and highlight the problems that have arisen with projects that have tackled structural violence caused by poverty and ethnic divisionism but have failed to address underlying disparities related to cultural issues. Gender-based violence is caught up in different agendas: the equality agenda of the Government of Rwanda, committed to encouraging women to join the workforce and to the appointment of women in high government offices; the international human rights agenda, which seeks to educate the population about violence against women and protect the rights of women; and the varying agendas of other funding agencies pursuing other causes. The array of agendas relating to gender-based violence and violence against women makes the picture highly complicated. My chapter does not pursue the complexity of these often competing agendas, but it is clear that more analysis of organizational structures and their relation to varying economic and cultural agendas urgently needs to be carried out.

Foreign investment has rebuilt Rwanda's economic infrastructure and the manner in which donor relations influence systems of governance has been the focus of much discussion.¹⁰ Peter Uvin, for example, highlights the profound impact of international aid (both directly and indirectly) on post-genocide Rwanda and points to the heavy investment of the donor community in the promotion of justice: 'In total, [by 2001] donors had funded more than 100 justice-related projects, costing more than \$100 million.'¹¹ Although post-conflict Rwanda defines its own national identity by means of a unified and non-ethnically divided form of nationalism (it is illegal to use former ethnic identities of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa), its government has committed ethnic violence in the DRC against both Rwandan Hutu refugees and Congolese Hutu.¹² The fact that there is continued warfare based on ethnicity conducted by the Government of Rwanda outside its borders while it performs ethnic unification within its own borders raises questions about what kinds of performances are enacted under the pretence of justice.¹³

In this chapter, I will illustrate the complex negotiation between human rights violations from a local to international level through *Ukuri Mubinyoma*, the participatory theatre project that I worked on with Rwandan theatre company MASHIRIKA Creative and Performing Arts Group between March and June 2006. MASHIRIKA, originally founded by Hope Azeda at Makerere University in 1997, aspires 'to prove that performing arts is not only entertainment, but a tool of social transformation and source of employment'.¹⁴ The name, derived from Swahili, means 'to bring efforts together'. Azeda, the MASHIRIKA Group and I drafted the project in partnership. *Ukuri Mubinyoma* was written by Sam Kyagas through a series of devising workshops with members of MASHIRIKA and was directed by Azeda. The project aimed to change attitudes to violence against women by illuminating various problems related to gender-based violence, and promoted open debate about its root causes and solutions. The project had several objectives: to research the causes for gender-based violence and find out how gender-based violence was enacted at a local level; to develop an interactive methodology to enlist the thoughts, opinions and experiences of attendees at the performance; and to disseminate knowledge about the impending law throughout the districts of Rwanda.¹⁵

My discussion of unspeakability in this chapter is further complicated by the tight control over speech exercised by the Government of Rwanda and by the fact that, following the genocide, the use of ethnic terms in Rwanda could be criminalized (see law number 47/2001 of 18 December 2001, entitled 'Instituting Punishment for Offences of

Discrimination and Sectarianism'). This law does not define what could be considered an act of discrimination; instead, the definition of the term is left to those in power to adjudicate.¹⁶ Despite the complexities I have outlined, it is my experience that theatre provides a useful fictional frame to negotiate between constructed iterations controlled by the Rwandan Government and offers a viable site for the promotion of dialogue.

Gacaca: participatory justice

The *Ukuri Mubinyoma* project and its use of participatory theatre practices came at a time when public speech in Rwanda was tightly controlled through the participatory justice system called *gacaca*, implemented nationally between 2005 and 2012. *Gacaca* closed in June 2012; by that point, more than 1.9 million cases had been tried, involving just over a million suspects. The vast majority of these trials occurred between mid-2006 and mid-2010. Notions of the speakable and unspeakable must be understood within the frame of *gacaca*, which intersects in complex ways with Western human rights discourses. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf have provided a robust account of how and why the current Government of Rwanda has created a social engineering project as a result of the collapse of infrastructure during the genocide, and how the former regime has been replaced by an authoritarian military regime that has enforced varied programmes – transitional justice, agricultural reform, villagization, civic education, and a remapping and renaming of regional territories to 'remake' Rwanda.¹⁷ Straus and Waldorf state that the Government of Rwanda 'also seeks to alter social identities, cultural norms, and individual behaviour'.¹⁸ One area that has not been significantly addressed in current debates is how culture has been enlisted into the creation of official national narratives in the aftermath of the genocide.

The gender-based violence law was implemented in 2008, during the time frame when *gacaca* courts were conducted, and when sexual violence and rape were considered crimes against humanity. The *gacaca* courts relied upon three primary categories: Category One for those who planned and organized the genocide and their accomplices; Category Two for killers and those who acted with the intention to kill and their accomplices; and Category Three for property related crimes. Rape and sexual violence were declared Category One crimes, and were initially brought to trial in the ordinary courts and subsequently transferred to the *gacaca* courts in 2008. Testimonies related to sexual violence and

rape were initially heard in closed sessions (trial via camera) in the presence of a trained *inyangamugayo* (person of integrity voted in as judge for *gacaca*), a trauma counsellor, and security. Kaitesi notes that Category One comprised 'an estimated 10,000 suspects of whom 7,000 were suspected of sexual torture and rape and have been tried accordingly'.¹⁹ *Ukuri Mubinyoma* is linked to *gacaca* indirectly, through the rise of an open public discourse that challenged traditional concepts about violence and the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

The tensions between the politics of participation in Rwanda and international Western discourses are manifold. Borrowing from Claire Bishop's work on theorizing visual arts practices, I see participation as a form that revolves around 'people [as] the central artistic medium and material'.²⁰ But the Western notion of participation is complicated by its prevalent construction as an inherently democratic and egalitarian form of citizenship. In this regard, it is useful to pay heed to the warnings recently issued by Markus Miessen. Reflecting on the overuse of the term 'participation', Miessen argues for a conflictual model – for 'a concept of participation as a way to enter politics (forcing oneself into existing power relations) instead of a "politically motivated model of pseudo-participation" (a proposition to let others contribute to the decision-making process), which is habitually stirred by the craving for political legitimization'.²¹ Miessen also warns against participation as a form of domestication and calls for the practitioner to develop both horizontal and vertical engagement with existing power structures:

Both historically and in terms of political agency, participation is often read through romantic notions of negotiation, inclusion, and democratic decision-making. However, it is precisely this often-unquestioned mode of inclusion (used by politicians as never-ending campaigns for retail politics) that does not produce significant results, as criticality is challenged by the concept of the majority.²²

There are interesting tensions between models of participation currently debated by Western practitioners and the use of participation in Rwanda after the genocide. In the context of *gacaca*, participation was an important concept for the formation of the new Rwandan identity. Citizens were required to attend and participate in the *gacaca* courts, and *inyangamugayo* were elected from the local population to serve in *gacaca* courts, following a training based on *gacaca* laws and adjudication. The whole of the population was mandated to attend the courts on the same day each week, as ordained by law, to give testimony and to contribute

to the noted aims of justice and reconciliation. How participation can be recognized as an ethos and practice of applied arts is one question, but participation and participatory practices become even more complicated when the whole of the nation is mandated to participate in the *gacaca* courts and participation is regarded as political legitimization. In this case, any participatory arts project between the period between 2005 and 2012 inherently elided with national slogans based on how and why citizens were requested (or forced) to participate.

Gacaca – Kinyarwanda for ‘grassy place’, where the opposed parties would meet to mediate disputes – was hallmarked as an indigenous justice system. But *gacaca* had never before been used for manslaughter or crimes against humanity. It was promoted as a Rwandan solution to a Rwandan problem.²³ At the request of the Government of Rwanda, the United Nations created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) on 8 November 1994 to try senior instigators of the genocide, but due to the extensive amount of time and money allotted for each case and the distance of the ICTR (in Tanzania) from Rwanda, there has always been controversy over its effectiveness. In order to accelerate court processes in Rwanda and to alleviate the overburdened prisons, the Government promoted a local solution and sought to engage the active participation of Rwandans towards ‘truth-seeking’ and ‘fighting against impunity’ that resulted in the establishment of *gacaca* courts.²⁴ International donors supported the proposition for the local level courts that would be initiated nationally as a solution to prison over-population and as a remedy for the lack of judges and lawyers following the genocide.²⁵

As I have noted, the economy of Rwanda relies heavily on international aid and Western agencies deploy an ideology of ‘justice’ and ‘development’ to support their investment. But there are inherent differences between how the Government of Rwanda performs for the international community and how power and resources are negotiated on the ground. The RPF’s version of justice and development does not necessarily align with Western international standards of human rights.²⁶ Filip Reyntjens has pointed out the significant power of the RPF to silence any outside contestation as a systemic defence tactic that relies on ‘genocide currency’, their closure of certain human rights organizations, and their enforced one-party government. The RPF have also effectively ignored recommendations provided by *gacaca* monitoring agencies including Penal Reform International (PRI) and Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF).²⁷ At the same time, the alignment of the RPF with Western powers (for example, inclusion into the Commonwealth) has been an important tactic to hold and maintain power in Rwanda. But

the potential adoption of gender-based violence laws and gender-based power-sharing to highlight Rwanda’s development may, in fact, be used to obscure the lack of power-sharing between ethnic groups and the current human rights violations committed by the Government of Rwanda. Reyntjens has commented on these issues:

Another way of hiding control by the RPF is the use of youth and women’s organizations. In 1998 an RPF congress put Aloysia Inyumba, the Minister for Women and Social Services, in charge of building up a national network of women’s groups, using aid funds for women’s empowerment allocated to her ministry. By the first quarter of 1999, Catholic youth leaders were recruited to mobilize the young. Women and youth leaders were promised positions within the future district councils or even seats in Parliament if they supported the RPF. In parallel, the ‘solidarity camps’ organized by the NURC became the training grounds for RPF political sensitization and education, and for the selection of electoral candidates. Although internationally hailed as a model of women’s empowerment, the 24 MPs representing women, elected in an indirect and opaque way, are all ‘RPF-approved’, and they serve to hide the RPF’s domination of Parliament.²⁸

The *Ukuri Mubinyoma* project was caught within this complex net of agendas. Janelle Reinelt has written, in another context, about the manner in which ‘[n]arratives and icons of national identity are routinely transformed in cultural representations, especially performance, and become intertextual signifiers within other cultural narratives’; Reinelt evokes the ways in which performance as a social practice can establish a dominant narrative in its home context and ‘how the staging of other nation’s narratives and texts redeploys “foreign” national images and tropes for local purposes’.²⁹ Her point is well taken in the case of *Ukuri Mubinyoma*, a project situated amidst the complexities and ethical quandaries of international and national agendas of gender, human rights and justice.

Working between human rights agendas

I begin this section with an extract from my notes on the tour of *Ukuri Mubinyoma*:

The van carrying nine performers brushed past banana plants and dirt roads until it arrived at the destination of a community centre

hall. An actor called out the time and place of the upcoming performance through a bullhorn, as a couple of school children followed behind the van. After disembarking, the actors changed into their costumes that portrayed common clothing customary to the local area, and drew crowds with drumming and dance. The performance proceeded, primarily based on the plight of a married woman Anonciata, who seeks to earn money through a women's collective. The husband, Calixte, fearing her new independence and economic solvency, turns to drink and womanising. In the hope of buying a sewing machine to generate additional income, Anonciata hides her money so that it does not get swallowed up in the alcoholism of Calixte. One evening, after drinking at the bar, Calixte finds the stash of hidden money and confronts Anonciata. The skit ends in a climax, the husband about to strike, with the women's association just outside the door. One actor who is a theatrical mediator between the actors and audience throughout the performance, stops the action and addresses the audience for their opinions about what could or should be done about the situation. The reactions from the community are mixed. Several men criticized Anonciata for disobeying Calixte. Yet, a few women in the audience argued for the necessity of women to take part in their own economic livelihood. In post-show interviews many respondents made links between the prevalence of rape during the genocide and the witnessing of extreme violence to the potential cyclical nature of enacting violence.

Ukuri Mubinyoma used theatre as a vehicle to discuss and disseminate information about the introduction of the new law of 10 September 2008, and also to address post-genocide violence and discuss its prevention and punishment. The Rwandan Ministry of Justice and the Belgian Development Agency or Coopération Technique Belge (CTB) funded the project in collaboration with the Mashirika Group. The script was developed through initial research provided by local health NGOs in Kigali including HAGURUKA (Association of the Defence of Women and Children's Rights) and Urunana Development Communication (an NGO dealing with sexual and reproductive health). The inclusion of partners such as the Ministry of Justice and local health organizations ensured experiential and factual accuracy in the messages we promoted.

The project design included two focus groups (one in a rural and one in an urban area) who collected varied personal stories and public opinions about gender-based violence. Twelve additional focus group

soundings were taken in each province while on tour. Under the directorial guidance of Hope Azeda, actors from Mashirika, who were cast to reflect an ethnic and demographic mix, rehearsed scenarios which tested audience attitudes towards gender-based violence and were conceived to enlist moments of potential intervention. Discussion points related, in particular, to the involvement of women in associations, to community and Government responses to gender-based violence, and to the generation of individual opinions related to the issues raised. Initial focus group discussions brought up issues concerning domestic violence against men, and these were included as one element of the plot. However, audiences generally felt that domestic violence against men was either non-existent or should not merit inclusion in the plot, even though gender-based violence against men was a reality, and even though the new law protected men as well as women.³⁰

I accompanied the national tour of *Ukuri Mubinyoma* throughout Rwanda and conducted post-show discussions, focus groups and individual interviews. I also met regularly with representatives from the Ministry of Justice to discuss the script and performances. Additionally, I worked with Mashirika to apply participatory performance practices within the framework of the production.³¹ The characters were 'true to life', meaning that their physical appearance, dialect and actions were based on scenarios presented by our rural and urban focus groups. Due to the interactive nature of the production and familiar characterization of the storyline, the production served as a barometer to gauge opinions and experiences of gender-based violence throughout the country. In some cases, individuals actively discussed the reasons for the antagonist's behaviour, while in other communities knowledge of the new law on gender-based violence shaped discussion. Most illuminating was the discrepancy, from one community to the next, between the practice and tolerance of gender-based violence and the awareness of the impending gender-based violence law.

Since the project was directly connected to the Rwandan Government's remit to disseminate information about the new law, a representative from the Ministry of Justice attended several performances, as well as representatives from local NGOs working on gender-based violence issues and with women's human rights associations such as AVEGA (Association of the Widows of Genocide), HAGURUKA and Urunana. In terms of creating a model that connected rights based issues with campaigns towards policy-making and effective change, the project successfully developed dialogue about sensitive issues, counter to the cultures of silence that have traditionally been associated with women

and children in Rwanda. As Kaitesi has stated, 'Culture has trained Rwandan women and children not to speak in public, let alone speak about topics which are considered to be obscene.'³² But the 2008 law on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence includes clauses dealing with domestic threat, conjugal rape, violence as the cause of divorce, the protection of children against gender-based violence, the care of victims of violence, the prevention of indecency, and details the sanctions for breaching the law (fines and imprisonment). As such, the performance of *Ukuri Mubinyoma* was entangled with cultural challenges about the implementation of the new law and allowed a collective community response to the issues. Major points of discussion were the tradition of silence in Rwanda, the role of women in the household, economic deprivation (particularly that arising from the imprisonment of men), and the importance of collective social responses to the epidemic of gender-based violence.

There are sections of the play that reflect the change in Rwanda's culture and sections which portray common myths and stereotypes taken from the initial focus group discussions. The opening scene depicts a grassroots association, of which there are many in Rwanda, and the varied tensions and challenges they face in the wake of the genocide as a result of the clashes between national and international imperatives.³³ The actor playing Ester was well known to many audience members in Rwanda and widely perceived as personifying Hutu identity, just as the actor playing Kamugundu personified Twa identity. Scene One is set at the association's venue where Ester, Philippo, Devota, Marita and Kamugundu are members. Ester enters and prepares the space, singing the cultural song *Urwiririza* (often used for building morale). Devota and Ruvumbuka enter and comment on the work done by Ester, who stresses the necessity to prepare for the upcoming market: 'As the head of the collective I'm supposed to organize the space and to get ready for the sewing. We are close to achieving many of our goals... about to even set up a literacy programme. Ahh... the village is doing so well, fortune is shining on us.' The scene continues as follows:

Philippo (To Kamugundu): I saw you on the road and called you from behind to stop... but you didn't respond, what happened to your ears? *(The whole collective laughs. He continues to greet the others. He joins Ruvumbuka to sew.)*

Marita: Now you've started your stories again that take us from our work.

Ester (Laughing): Stop those jokes. Let's do what brought us here. Are you sure that what you are talking about is what you saw or are you just trying to make us laugh?

Kamugundu: Anonciata's husband Calixte would be very poor if the milk from goats was collected instead of the milk from cows... Eh, where is Anonciata, I thought she was supposed to have been here. *(Whole collective turns to look at the chair where Anonciata would normally sit.)*

The reference to the goat metaphorically alludes to traditions that have been altered and to Calixte's old-fashioned resistance to changes in Rwandan culture which are understood to threaten economic and political development. The scene continues with a discussion about the plight of Anonciata, who covertly but actively engages with the association, although her husband Calixte has forbidden it and routinely beats her. The law against gender-based violence is mentioned at several points in the play, and the characters illustrate a range of common attitudes and patterns of behaviour in response to the changing role of women in the household (when women earn more money than men) and to the widespread problems of unemployment and alcoholism.³⁴ One particular character, Marita, defends traditional gender roles:

Marita: What did you want her to do?

Ester: Report the case.

Marita: Ester, I thought you were a true Rwandan woman, but I am beginning to doubt you.

Ester: What do you mean Marita?

Marita: I mean, it has never happened anywhere in our culture for a woman to go out of her way to say such things in public. Never, that would be a shame. It is a man's right (*nuko zubakwa*) that a woman has to bear, and I congratulate Anonciata for that.

Devota: Marita, I do not support you at all.

Ester: I want to tell you Marita, that what you call a man's right is an abuse of human rights and whatever violent thing a man does, it is criminal.

Marita: What I can see is that if we are not careful, what we thought

such cases and she was battered day and night. It is an old practice.

Marita: And who are we to change things?

Ester: Days have gone and things have changed and it is what I want us to know. All forms of gender-based violence are criminal and that they should be reported. Starving a family!

Devota: Is a human rights abuse and criminal.

Ester: Forcing women into sex.

Devota: Is a human rights abuse and criminal.

Kamugundu: Just a minute, if you are talking about forcing women into sex as criminal, then what about women who deny their husbands sex?

Devota: Women's rights are human rights.

Ester: Denying women from visiting and being visited?

Devota: Is a human rights abuse and criminal. These things must be stopped at all costs.

The Kinyarwanda term *nuko zubakwa* refers to the dominant role of men and the expectation that women remain submissive. In the context of this dialogue, it can be translated as 'that is what happens in marriage'. The discussion turns into an inducement to determine what might be considered a human rights abuse, and to the policies that have been introduced to alter societal norms. In the following scenes, Anonciata decides to quit the collective for fear of angering her husband, and she takes home the last of her earnings to purchase a sewing machine so that she can work from home. However, Calixte discovers the money and spends it on drink. Ester and Ruvumbuka go to Anonciata's home, where they find Calixte tying his wife down with rope and threatening her with a beating. The action ends with a confrontation between association members who call for intervention by the local police.

At several points in the play, audience members were asked to voice their opinions on the debate, vote for different characters, and offer responses as to why gender-based violence has been practised in the home and why it can no longer be tolerated. Two actors-as-mediators, who started the performance by encouraging audiences to gather using dance, drumming and gymnastics, made physical interventions to stop the performance at certain moments and initiate dialogue. After the final scene, in which Calixte, belt in hand, raises his fist above Anonciata, the actors-as-mediators stopped the scene and the audience was asked a set of questions: What do you think are the causes of gender-based violence? What do you think are the solutions to prevent

gender-based violence? What should happen to Calixte? What recommendations would you give to Anonciata? How should associations respond in such situations? The closing remark was that gender-based violence is against the law, and was usually delivered by a representative from the Ministry of Justice. In this way, through the personification of varied perspectives embodied by familiar characters, the performance elicited reactions on a subject normally considered unspeakable.

The performance also involved a post-show discussion and interviews at the performance venues, which were usually conducted in the community or town halls. The announcement about post-show discussions followed each performance and generally elicited between ten and thirty additional attendees. Discussants for post-show discussions and interviews were also recruited prior to the performance through one-to-one conversations that the actors and I undertook with community members to elicit interest and to gather information. At one particular performance in Kibungo on 1 May 2006, there was a large group of youths in attendance, as the performance followed a May Day celebration. When asked about their response, the group stated that the association should correct Calixte's behaviour, that he should go to prison, that he should stop drinking, and that Anonciata should speak up. At one point during the performance, the audience was asked whether they sided with Marita or Ester. There was overwhelming support for Ester, but several men left the show. One audience member related gender-based violence to the new culture of female membership in associations, stating that people do not understand the concept of equality and that men want to be head of the household. There was evidence, it seemed to me, that internationally or nationally driven campaigns for equality may need further sensitization and mobilization across the whole of the country. The performance changed at various points during the tour, in response to levels of audience engagement, internal evaluation, and recommendations from the Ministry of Justice. Additional audience warm-ups were integrated to encourage audience participation alongside the inclusion of the joker characters.³⁵ Throughout the tour I was the actors' coach in physical characterization and vocal projection, necessary because of the often poor sound acoustics of performance venues and the large audiences.

Parts of the text and subplots were amended in response to advice by the Ministry of Justice. Some of the changes described how children are affected by gender-based violence: poor performance in school or non-attendance, malnourishment and poor health. Children, it was argued, can be the victims of gender-based violence, particularly in

situations involving child labour and sexual violence. The representative from the Ministry of Justice noted that the widespread practice of gender-based violence is overwhelmingly against women, and that Ruvumbuka's lines linking his abuse to his membership of the association should be cut (although a case that had come to light through the focus group involved a man who was beaten by his wife). These issues were raised and interventions encouraged, but the primary focus of the Ministry of Justice was to ensure that the target audience for the performance included local authorities and organizations connected to legal support structures. Attendees were provided with the names and contacts of local authorities to gain further information about the new gender-based violence law.

Rwandan cultural performer and scholar Alice Mukaka has spoken of the regional aspects of gender-based violence – particularly *guterura*, marriage without consent, which may include kidnapping, rape and sexual violence:

There is no agreement between the two persons, just to take the woman. *Guterura* can be caused by the man not having a dowry. There are many cases of gender-based violence. It is a part of trauma. The use of alcohol and violence stemming from the genocide creates gender-based violence. Also, women's emancipation has created a disturbance in the family. Perhaps it is from tradition that the woman should be subordinate, but now women are aware of their roles in society and there is conflict with the men who want to hold onto tradition. Today in Rwanda, women play a big role in society by holding positions of power in Government, raising orphans, and being the heads of household while a large number of men are in prison or have been killed in the genocide. The Government has responded by empowering women through changing laws that give them greater rights, rewriting the constitution, and giving power in civil society. Since the role of women has changed drastically, there is conflict between the past and the social and economic changes of today.³⁶

Of the twelve provinces that the project toured, one particular province, Byumba, was known for high levels of gender-based violence. *Ukuri Mubinyoma* actively encouraged debate. Audience members responded with comments reflecting a range of experiences and different levels of familiarity with the issues, but they also expressed doubts regarding the efficacy of the law in an economically precarious situation. One audience member stated that, even if the husband went to

jail for beating his wife, there would then be no money coming into the household. Audience interventions focused on the necessity to educate or sensitize men to the necessary break from traditional structures, on the need to support women's emancipation, and on the importance of local authorities' support for women's associations. The project promoted the overall message that solutions depend on local and national understanding of, and support for, the changing role of women in society.

Between cultural signifiers and international agendas

I have described *Ukuri Mubinyoma* as a dialogic construct that promoted the introduction of a new gender-based violence law and allowed for active conscientization within the community based on increased dialogue and debate. However, other factors posed challenges to the aims of the project, including the disparity between the implementation of the law and traditional cultural practices. The project explored those challenges through its scripted scenarios, and through its eliciting of intervention and public debate. Many women in Rwanda today are locally elected *inyangamugayo*, a distinction that was traditionally taboo for females. This is significant following the closure of *gacaca*, since many of the *inyangamugayo* continue to serve within a justice and reconciliation capacity as local mediators through *abunzi*, a local pre-trial mediation framework. However, as Kubai and Ahlberg argue, strong disparities still remain between cultural beliefs and behaviours and the goals of gender equality driven by international programmes. Responding to the United Nations' Development Assistance for Rwanda strategy report (2008–2012), Kubai and Ahlberg note that participants in their study reported 'confusion' and 'misunderstanding' about gender roles arising from new policies. They conclude: 'Apparently, the majority of women in Rwanda do not exercise control over ideology or what is termed as "culture". In this context, the interpretations and application of the idea of "cultural tradition" are problematic, hence women are caught between the competing discourses of empowerment and a deeply entrenched gender inequality.'³⁷

In order to engage critically with the tension between the structure of *gacaca*, the lack of power-sharing by RPF, and human rights violations in Rwanda, we had to ask ourselves on this project what theatrical practice might achieve and how. Although the artistic and directorial team of *Truth in Lies* specifically cast Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa actors in equal numbers, this was not a requirement of the project, not mentioned in the

text, and not reported. However, in order to enable the population to engage actively with the topic and to represent the communities whom we addressed, it was paramount to demonstrate representation of ethnicity, age and gender. While the *gacaca* oversaw how testimonies were to be delivered and what information was required, the *Ukuri Mubinyoma* project offered space to identify the possible root causes for gender-based violence and encouraged suggestions for reform from local bases. In Umutara province, for example, audience members suggested that associations could be used for further community development such as literacy and training programmes. Other comments from audience members reflected on what might have been missing from the play, such as how authorities might solve problems related to gender-based violence. There was general awareness of and commentary on the causes for gender-based violence linked to poverty and lack of education. Others commented on the correlation between the increase in gender-based violence as a symptom of prison sentences: men in prison, they argued, can become jealous, which leads to further spirals of violence. Spectators also noted that providing for those in prison placed a significant economic responsibility on the shoulders of the families of perpetrators, and that such economic disparity can provoke gender-based violence. Many commented on the fact that gender-based violence had been rampant prior to the genocide. Although the primary drive of the performance related to the new gender-based violence law, several stated that the first response to the unspeakability of gender-based violence should be to break the taboo and speak out to friends and family in the community, and then inform the authorities.

Thus the project illuminated various problems related to the root causes of gender-based violence and opened up discourse in an otherwise closed society. One attendee stated, '[w]hat they performed is true to life. If women are active in associations and find people to talk to, then it is good. If you communicate, then it shows that you don't have to be alone.' Another stated, '[t]he play is good because most people have not seen a play about gender-based violence. I learned what to do, because I have a greater understanding.' Overwhelmingly, attendees commented on the importance of speaking out and the dangers of suffering in silence. As I have said, the project has to be understood within a complex nexus of competing local and international agendas to which theatre practitioners working in contexts of nation-building and women's rights must be alert at all times. Beyond these political complications, the project still enabled individuals to speak openly about characters and scenarios and relate them to their own life circumstances.

The open discussion of these issues was a major step forward for Rwanda. The efficacy of the new law, of course, remains to be seen.

Notes

1. Catrien Bijleveld, Aafke Morssinkhof and Alette Smeulers, 'Counting the Countless: Rape Victimization During the Rwandan Genocide,' *International Criminal Justice Review* 19, no. 2 (2009): 208–24.
2. Forced sexual intercourse with dead animals was used as a form of torture against men. Usta Kaitezi, *Genocidal Gender and Sexual Violence: The Legacy of the ICTR, Rwanda's Ordinary Courts and Gacaca Courts* (Cambridge: Intersentia, 2013), 76.
3. See Tina Sideris, 'Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power and Identity,' in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-conflict Transformation* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Giulia La Mattina, 'Armed Conflict and Domestic Violence: Evidence from Rwanda,' working paper, Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference 2012 at Dartmouth, accessed 19 September 2013, http://www.dartmouth.edu/~neudc2012/docs/paper_283.pdf.
4. For a more detailed discussion of the project, see Ananda Breed, *Performing the Nation: Genocide, Justice, Reconciliation* (Chicago: Seagull Press, 2013).
5. Law N°59/2008 of 10 September 2008 on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda*, 6 April 2009, accessed 25 September 2013, <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/rwanda.genderviolence.08.pdf>. On the government policies and programmes that set the context for the new law, see Anne Kubai and Beth Maina Ahlberg, 'Making and Unmaking Ethnicities in the Rwandan Context: Implications for Gender-based Violence, Health, and Wellbeing of Women,' *Ethnicity and Health* 18, no. 5 (2013): 469–82.
6. Chris McGreal, Xan Rice, and Lizzy Davies, 'Delayed UN Report Links Rwanda to Congo Genocide,' *Guardian*, 1 October 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/01/un-report-rwanda-congo-genocide>.
7. See Kaitezi, *Genocidal Gender and Sexual Violence*, 68.
8. Kubai and Ahlberg, 'Making and Unmaking,' 478.
9. See National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda and ICF International, *Rwanda 2010 Demographic and Health Survey: Key Findings*, accessed 19 September 2013, <http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/SR187/SR187.pdf>.
10. See Eugenia Zorbas, 'Aid Dependence and Policy Independence: Explaining the Rwandan Paradox,' in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 103–17; Rachel Hayman, 'Funding Fraud? Donors and Democracy in Rwanda,' in *Remaking Rwanda*, 118–31.
11. Peter Uvin, 'Difficult Choices in the New Post-Conflict Agenda: The International Community in Rwanda after the Genocide,' *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2001): 182.
12. See Filip Reyntjens, 'Waging (Civil) War Abroad: Rwanda and the DRC,' in *Remaking Rwanda*, 132–51; Jason Stearns and Federico Borello 'Bad

- Karma: Accountability for Rwandan Crimes in the Congo,' in *Remaking Rwanda*, 152–69.
13. On performances related to justice and reconciliation, see Breed, *Performing the Nation*. On ethnicity, see Nigel Eltringham, 'The Past is Elsewhere: The Paradoxes of Proscribing Ethnicity in Post-Genocide Rwanda,' in *Remaking Rwanda*, 269–82.
 14. See Mashirika's website, <http://www.mashirika.com/about-us/origins>.
 15. On this law, see Elizabeth Pearson, *Demonstrating Legislative Leadership: The Introduction of Rwanda's Gender Based Violence Bill*, ed. Elizabeth Powley (Washington, DC: The Initiative for Inclusive Security, 2008), http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/1078_rwanda_demonstrating_legislative_leadership_updated_6_20_08.pdf. For examples of unjustified arrests and imprisonment, see Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2005: Rwanda,' <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2005/rwanda>.
 17. Straus and Waldorf, 'Introduction: Seeing Like a Post-Conflict State,' in *Remaking Rwanda*, 4.
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. Kaitesi, *Genocidal Gender and Sexual Violence*.
 20. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 2.
 21. Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 14.
 22. Miessen, *The Nightmare*, 13.
 23. See Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman, *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts and Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice Without Lawyers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). I thank Lars Waldorf for further email conversations about *gacaca*.
 24. *Gacaca* addresses genocide crimes committed between 1 October 1990 and 31 December 1994, and the ICTR crimes committed between 1 January and 31 December 1994.
 25. See also Martien Schotsmans, '"But We Also Support Monitoring": INGO Monitoring and Donor Support to Gacaca Justice in Rwanda,' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5, no. 3 (2011): 390.
 26. See Filip Reyntjens, 'Constructing the Truth, Dealing with Dissent, Domesticating the World: Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda,' *African Affairs* 110, no. 438 (2011): 18.
 27. On the limitations of *gacaca*, see Allison Correy and Sandra F. Joireman, 'Retributive Justice: The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda,' *African Affairs* 103, no. 410 (2004): 73–89; Alana Erin Tiemessen, 'After Arusha: Gacaca Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda,' *African Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2004): 60–1; Barbara Oomen, 'Donor-Driven Justice and its Discontents: The Case of Rwanda,' *Development and Change* 36, no. 5 (2005): 887–910; Erin Daly, 'Between Punitive and Reconstructive Justice: The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda,' *NYU Journal of International Law and Politics* 34 (2002): 355–96.
 28. Reyntjens, 'Constructing the Truth, Dealing with Dissent, Domesticating the World,' 17.
 29. Janelle Reinelt, 'Staging the Nation on Nation Stages,' in *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre, History, Practice and Theory*, ed. Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 126.
 30. See Kenneth Agutamba, 'Domestic Violence: Men Are Victims, Too,' *The Rwanda Focus*, 28 November 2011, accessed 7 October 2013, <http://focus.rw/wp/2011/11/domestic-violence-men-are-victims-too/>.
 31. Our participatory frameworks were adaptations of Boal's models. See Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1979).
 32. Kaitesi, *Genocidal Gender and Sexual Violence*, 210.
 33. See Breed, *Performing the Nation*, 134–5.
 34. Sarah Boseley, 'Rwanda: A Revolution in Rights for Women,' *Guardian*, 28 May 2010, accessed 7 October 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/28/womens-rights-rwanda>.
 35. 'Joker' is a Boalian term for the mediator between actor/spectator, though spectators may also become actors, 'spectactors'.
 36. Author's interview with Alice Mukaka, 10 July 2005.
 37. Kubai and Ahlberg, 'Making and Unmaking,' 478.